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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR 2008 DENVER RESOURCE ECONOMICS COURSE

REF: STATE 20791

¶1. Per reftel, the following is Joshua Archibald's application for the 2008 Denver Resource Economics Course, PE-142, scheduled for July 7-11.

Current Assignment: Economic/Commercial/ESTH/AID/UXO/ODC officer in Vientiane Laos until summer 2009.

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Tentative travel plans: Depart Laos Friday July 4 enroute to DC, expected arrival July 5 and expected departure July 12.

¶2. Mr. Archibald covers energy and mining for Embassy Vientiane. Laos is currently enjoying a massive resource boom, led by Australian mining firms and foreign hydropower investment. The largest taxpayer, largest exporter, and second largest employer in the country is Oxiana Mining of Australia, whose Sepon gold and copper mine has single-handedly pushed Oxiana into the middle rank of mining firms worldwide. Pan-Australian Mining has a concession covering about 1,000 square miles (over one percent of the country) and a gold/copper mine expected to generate profits similar to Oxiana. A Chinese-Australian joint venture is preparing an aluminum mine expected to generate an export value approximately equal to the current Lao GDP. Overseas investors from China, Vietnam, and Sweden, among others, are pursuing a wide range of plantation agriculture and other natural-resource based business opportunities.

¶3. In light of the importance of mining and natural resource exploitation to the Lao economy, the Denver Resource Economics Seminar appears to offer an excellent opportunity to expand Mr. Archibald's understanding of the sector and improve Embassy Vientiane's future reporting.

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